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Institution: Newcastle University
Unit of Assessment: UoA29 – English Language and Literature
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The principal impacts the Unit generates are felt first in the cultural life of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the region of North-East England. Through this work, the Unit (i) informs and influences educational practices (for both children and adults), (ii) enhances the economic prosperity of the city and region by strengthening its cultural institutions, (iii) extends public discourse and enhances the public understanding of literature, and (iv) benefits civil society by helping to embed cultural values and reaching out to disengaged and disadvantaged communities. Our work with regional partners reaches far beyond the North East: through local engagement we achieve national and international benefits. This commitment to bringing tangible benefits to regional, national and, in some cases, international users accords with the University's commitment to being a 'Civic' institution, delivering benefits to individuals, organisations, and to society, and to fostering research which has a purpose.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The Unit's core strategy is to maximise the impact of our research by engaging with a carefully selected group of partners, regional, national or international. The kinds of engagement we strive to generate and maintain, out of which tangible impacts will develop, can be grouped under four headings. They are set out here with an indicative sample of our partners and successful interactions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Enhancing cultural institutions. Staff in the Unit have worked closely with Northern Stage, Live Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (which tours to Newcastle annually), advising on programming, providing dramaturgical support, documenting performance and rehearsal practice, and curating archives. Unit staff run education programmes at the Tyneside Cinema, and lead activities at Bridge and Tunnel, an independent production company making films and delivering training and production schemes for young people and diverse communities. Staff have curated exhibitions at local and international venues (the Great North Museum in Newcastle, 2009; the Grolier Club in New York City 2013), and have been commissioned to develop a suite of children's literature web pages for the British Library (2013). A series of writing-residencies in cultural venues across the region led to a self-guided creative-writing tour of Newcastle-Gateshead ('Write Around The Toon', 2010). Colleagues frequently disseminate research and creative writing through the broadcast media, and have worked in close partnership with the BBC on its annual Free Thinking Festival at the Sage Gateshead (2009-). ii. Enhancing and protecting literary archives. Staff advise on acquisitions, archival practice and collections policies at archives in the region and beyond, including Newcastle City Library, Tyne and Wear Archives, and Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books. We work with our partners to protect important collections of at-risk materials. In 2013, the Unit secured funding to purchase and thus secure the future of the Bloodaxe Books and Flambard Press poetry archives. We were then awarded AHRC funding (£500k) to open the archive to community groups to enable their active and creative engagement with it. Major funding has also been secured to investigate, reorganise and open up other neglected cultural archives, including film-making trade union membership lists (2013) and unpublished BBC radio scripts (2012). iii. Outreach work to schools, colleges, prisons and disengaged adult communities. A number of Unit staff work with disengaged and low-literacy constituencies through collaborations with literacy and writing organisations. These include New Writing North, the Reader Organisation, and First Story (of which Fiennes is Founding Director) which brings authors into challenging secondary schools to run writing workshops. Staff have led several projects to educate teachers on creative writing classroom practices (e.g. 'Even Better Writers: Developing Skills to Promote Creative Writing in Schools', 2008), and have held residencies in Deerbolt Young Offenders' Unit (Kay, Fish). External funding has been sought and won to encourage community integration ('Regional Identity and the Literature of North-East England', 2011; 'Children's literature and young people's engagement with heritage', AHRC 2013), and colleagues have produced work designed to foster the social integration of culturally isolated communities, such as Gharavi's films made with and about refugee communities the Yemeni

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population in South Shields (2008). Colleagues working on film have provided programming support and materials to Crisis Skylight, the organisers of 'Open Cinema' (screenings, talks and workshops for homeless, socially excluded and vulnerable groups).

- iv. **Extending and deepening public discourse.** Unit staff frequently work in partnership with agencies, festivals and publishers, to generate and sustain interest in literature and particularly new writing. Recent partners include the British Council, the Poetry Society, the Booker Prize Foundation, the Wordsworth Trust, the Caine Prize, the Free Word Centre and Jaybird Productions. The annual Bloodaxe poetry lectures, for example, run by the Unit in partnership with Bloodaxe Books, provide one of the most important international forums for critical debate on poetry. Our events programme is designed to reach new audiences, and to encourage reading and writing, for instance through integration with *Juice*, NewcastleGateshead's annual festival for children and young people, and through filmed readings made for use in hospitals and care homes.

Although we seek to foster research impact across the whole Unit, several specific academic groups have been developed with the express aim of enhancing the societal impact of our research. The Children's Literature Unit (CLU) was set up in 2005 to work in partnership with Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books (see case study 1). A Theatre Studies grouping works closely with national and regional theatre organisations, for example co-hosting events for schools with the RSC and Northern Stage as part of the World Shakespeare Festival/2012 Cultural Olympiad. The Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts (NCLA), a University Research Centre located wholly within the Unit, was founded in 2009 with the mission to contribute to the cultural life of the North East of England through the provision of events, education programmes, distinctive projects, and publications in the field of creative writing. Since then it has hosted over 100 readings and lectures (see case study 3) and has been particularly successful in introducing international writers (André Brink, Nuruddin Farrah, Sindiwe Magona, Meena Kadasamy, Yang Lian and many others) to North-East audiences. The NCLA's readings, workshops and interviews are filmed, and the films placed in an archive which greatly expands the reach of the Centre (accessed 30,000+ times from 15 countries).

Also central to our approach is the development of applications for external funding specifically designed to engage and benefit non-academic users. As well as the archival enhancement projects mentioned above, further examples include Procter's AHRC-funded 'Devolving Diasporas' project (see case study 4) and Grenby's AHRC-funded 'Children's Literature and Young People's Engagement with the Historic Built Environment' (in collaboration with English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces, the National Trust and others). Unit staff have been successful in winning AHRC funding for Collaborative Doctoral Studentships with Seven Stories and the National Maritime Museum. Our postgraduates have won external funding to develop impact from their research, receiving AHRC grants for projects such as 'Demystifying Public Engagement' (2010) and 'Postcolonial Studies and the Public Sphere' (2012).

Particular support has been given to research that contributes to the University's three Societal Challenge Themes, engaging new publics with literature at the same time as advancing public discourse in the area covered by each theme. For the first of these themes, 'Ageing and Health', the NCLA has run regular writing and reading workshops for older people and has hosted events with Joan Bakewell, Alan Brownjohn and others. Unit staff are partners in the Medical Research Council project 'Ageing Creatively' exploring the relation of creative arts interventions to wellbeing in later life. For the second theme, 'Sustainability', staff organised a series of public workshops and lectures on writing and the environment. For the third theme, 'Social Renewal', NCLA writers have run a poetry competition for young people in the North East, organised a series of public lectures and symposia on the historical dimension of social renewal (2012-13), and have contributed new poems to *The Colme Cille Spiral*, a public soundscape project linked to the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture and the return of the Lindisfarne Gospels to public display in the North East (July 2013). Other Social Renewal projects include Wilkinson's development of new fiction for recent migrant adults with the most basic reading skills, and Srivastava has organised a festival of South Asian Literature at Sage Gateshead, bringing together educators, translators and publishers to explore the role of translation in fostering a sense of a shared Indian national identity (2008).

c. Strategy and plans

The University's civic agenda, and its societal challenge themes, will continue to provide a

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framework for the Unit's impact policies. We will also continue our strategy of engaging with key regional partners, a range of institutions expanded through our leading role in the Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership with Durham University and Queen's University Belfast (awarded £11.2m by the AHRC, 2014-19). One example is a projected poetry archive collaboration between the NCLA, QUB's Seamus Heaney Centre, and the Wordsworth Trust.

The development of major archives for public use is central to our impact strategy. Alongside development of our own poetry archives, the Unit is in partnership with Seven Stories and the University Library to acquire a major private collection of historical children's books. Based on the research expertise of Unit staff, the collection will be made available to the public as a research resource and through an exhibition programme. In addition, K. Reynolds's and Pearson's current research on children's literature is influencing the design of the first permanent exhibition space at Seven Stories (2015). This represents a significant development in the CLU's approach to achieving impact, as the permanent exhibition space and supporting programme offers an opportunity for research findings to become embedded features of Seven Stories' exhibition and education programme. Unit staff are currently running a programme of consultation with Newcastle City Council, the City Library, Seven Stories, and the Literary & Philosophical Society to collaborate on a major campaign to designate Newcastle a 'city of reading'. This will provide a focus for the Unit's extensive research on reading practices, both historical and contemporary. The plans draw together a number of ongoing projects, including Richards' work on reading aloud in both early modern settings and in contemporary schools with literacy problems, and a collaboration between creative writing and linguistics colleagues to produce fiction suitable for adult refugees learning English as a second language.

The Unit has developed robust structures to manage and encourage on-going impact from research. Engagement and impact are standing items on the agenda of the School's Research Committee, the Research Centres Committee oversees the relationship between the School and the NCLA, and work with Seven Stories is directed by a joint steering committee comprising representatives from the Unit, Seven Stories, and the University Library and overseen by an advisory board consisting of academics, librarians and curators. An Advisory Board has been established to encourage the engagement of all School staff and students with non-academic partners. It includes alumni who have had exceptional careers in areas like film, TV and publishing (e.g. Mark Redhead, Hattrick Productions; Caroline Wintersgill, Bloomsbury). Placement schemes have been established for UG and PG students, including a 'Cultural Industries' module for stage 3 BA students. Two dedicated £500 bursaries are available annually to support PG students in placements with cultural organisations. The staff workload model and performance review process take impact activities into account, feeding through into promotion. Administrative staff in the School have support for impact activities built into their job specification and work load models.

d. Relationship to case studies

Case study 1 represents the Unit's collaborative work with a Newcastle-based partner (*Seven Stories*) which has national and international reach and significance, and highlights the kinds of impact our research has on cultural organisations and archives. Staff in the Unit have been instrumental in the establishment of Seven Stories, particularly in the development of its archive, and exhibition and events programmes.

Case studies 2 and 3 have been selected to highlight the research impact of the NCLA. One focuses on the impact of an individual (Jackie Kay), and exhibits the impact her writing has had not only on individual readers and in the media, but also on education, policy debate and the public discourse on adoption. The other (*Public Understanding of Poetry*) focuses on the work of our researchers on the cultural life of the city and region and the development of public understanding of literature, particularly in schools and for traditionally unengaged audiences.

Case study 4 (*Diasporas*) highlights another strand of the Unit's 'civic' mission, using literary research to foster a sense of identity in specific constituencies of readers and to promote diversity and inclusiveness in society more generally.

All four case studies demonstrate our aim to build and develop sustainable mechanisms by which the public can engage with literature. The benefits are clear: individual lives enriched through culture, educational practices enhanced through creative work, public discourse informed by greater understanding of culture, flourishing and economically prospering cultural institutions – and a more purposeful and participative research culture within our own Unit.